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UNCLAS DUSHANBE 000032

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STATE FOR EUR/CACEN, INL/AE - DEBORAH HOOKER

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: EMERGENCY SUPPLIES FOR TAJIKISTAN BORDER GUARDS

The following is a letter to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld from Charge d'Affaires Thomas H. Armbruster, U.S. Embassy, Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Hard copy follows by pouch:

BEGIN TEXT:

Dear Secretary Rumsfeld:

There are few sights more heartening for Embassy officers than seeing a U.S. Air Force C-130 landing. On January 2, the first C-130 landed in the snow in Dushanbe, bringing emergency support to Tajikistan's Border Guards.

I want to thank you for the airlift that Gen. Abizaid and his command executed over the New Year's holidays. Helping the Tajik Border Guards establish and operate a base of operations on the Afghan border, in spite of severe winter conditions, is an important contribution to regional security, and advances U.S. national interests by limiting the flow of illicit weapons, narcotics, and terrorists.

Tajikistan continues to be a world leader in narcotics interdictions, but border forces are not adequately resourced. Had the Tajik Border Guards curtailed their operations for lack of supplies, some in Russia could have pressured Tajikistan to accept the return of Russian border guards. In his New Year's address, President Rahmonov noted, "The full takeover by Tajik border guards of the protection of the state border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, as a symbol of our sovereign state, was an important achievement." The airlift helps Tajikistan maintain its sovereign right to protect its own borders, and it shows American commitment to regional stability.

CENTCOM's efforts, in close cooperation with the Department of State and Embassy Dushanbe's Country Team, are having a tremendous impact on the morale of the border guards. General Zukhurov, Head of the Border Guards, sends his heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all in the name of his personnel who now have adequate food and clothing for the winter.

The use of your counternarcotics "train and equip" authority to support national security objectives in the region shows great foresight, and Gen. Abizaid and his command are to be commended. We welcome your return to Tajikistan anytime and once again thank everyone involved, from pilots to loadmasters, for making a real difference on the Tajik-Afghan border.

Sincerely,

Thomas H. Armbruster
Chargi d'Affaires
END TEXT.

ARMBRUSTER

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